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Juries: Acting Out Digital Dilemmas to Promote Digital Reflections

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ABSTRACT

A quick journey through prevention science (e.g., substance misuse prevention) and a comparison between online and offline risks, harm, and vulnerability in children suggests that new approaches and interventions are needed to promote Internet safety and minimise the new sources of risk associated with accessing the Internet. In this paper we present a new methodological approach to promote digital literacy and positively influence the way in which young people interact with the Internet: *iRights Youth Juries*. These juries offer a solution for the challenge of how to engage children and young people in activities that, rather than simply promoting Internet safety, aim to provide the knowledge and the confidence required for developing healthy digital citizens. This approach thus begins to move beyond the notion of the Internet as a simple cause of social change, approaching it instead as an opportunity to engage knowledgeably with the digital world and maximise citizenship.

General Terms

J.4 SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

K.4 COMPUTERS AND SOCIETY

K.4.1 Public Policy Issues

- *Ethics*

- *Privacy*

K.4.2 Social Issues

Keywords

Digital rights, Internet safety, children and young people, vignettes, drama, education, engagement.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet is frequently held to transform social relationships, the economy, vast areas of public and private life across all ages and, probably very soon, across all cultures. Such arguments are often recycled in popular debates, sensational tabloid news materials, and indeed in academic contexts as well. Research discussions on the topic of the Internet oscillate between celebration and fear, where on the one hand, technology is seen to create new forms of community and civic life, and to offer immense resources for personal liberation and participation, while on the other, it poses dangers to privacy, creates new forms of inequality and commercial exploitation, in addition to increasing individual exposure to addiction triggers, abuse, and other forms of harm.

These kinds of ideas about the impact of technology tend to take on an even greater force when they are combined with ideas of childhood and youth. The debate about the impact of media and technology on children has always served as a focus for much broader hopes and fears about social change. On the one hand, there is a powerful discourse about the ways in which digital technology is threatening or even destroying childhood. Young people are seen to be at risk, not only from more obvious dangers such as pornography and online paedophiles, but also from a wide range of negative physical and psychological consequences that derive from their engagement with technology. Like television, digital media are seen to be responsible for a whole range of social ills—addiction, antisocial behaviour, eating disorders, educational underperformance, commercial exploitation, depression, envy and so on.

In recent years, however, the debate has come to be dominated by a very different argument. Unlike those who express regret about the media's destruction of childhood innocence, advocates of the new "digital generation" regard technology as a force of liberation for young people—a means for them to reach past the constraining influence of previous generations, and to create new, autonomous forms of communication and community. Far from corrupting the young, technology is seen to be creating a generation that is more open, more democratic, more creative, and more innovative than that of their parents.

Taking into account both the risks and opportunities associated with the Internet and digital technologies, this paper considers the unavoidable dialectical in which the Internet is both socially

shaped and socially shaping. In other words, by studying the way in which the Internet is utilised we gain insights into its overall role and impact, but we also uncover its inherent constraints and limitations which are in turn largely shaped by the social and economic interests of those who control its production, circulation, and distribution. Understanding the values and ideas that are encoded in and promoted through the structure and use of the Internet is essential for successfully managing the social, economic, and cultural effects that it generates.

2. INTERNET SAFETY

At present, there appears to be little robust research evidence that compares the success of available Internet Safety programs, or examines what materials or educational approaches are cost-effective, and how programmes are being implemented in the community. Outcome evaluations have been limited in sophistication, and so far current results show little evidence that Internet Safety programmes reduce risky online behaviours or prevent negative experiences. On the contrary, studies have indicated that while children within test groups are able to retain the extra knowledge presented to them, the learning has been found to have little impact on children's online behaviour [1].

In response to increasing concerns about the extent to which Internet activities put children and young people at risk from sexual and psychological abuse, numerous Internet safety educational materials including online guidelines, tools, and advice for parents and teachers have been developed with the intention of minimising such risks. Internet Safety, however, appears to have more in common with risk prevention programmes than programmes aiming to promote digital rights among children and young people. For example, Internet victimisation risk factors, such as rule-breaking behaviour, mental health issues, and social isolation, are very similar to the risk factors for so many other youth behavioural problems [2-6].

Therefore, interventions aiming to promote digital literacy among children and young people may consider backing activities that have already been shown to reduce related risks factors [1]. While prevention and promotion interventions may have similar goals such as reducing cyberbullying or sexual exploitation, some important differences arise when focusing on the risks rather than on the opportunities that Internet can bring. Using the Internet can be a very healthy and rewarding activity as well as a potentially dangerous and unhealthy experience; it all depends on the user's awareness, knowledge and intentions.

Livingstone [7] suggests that risk, harm and vulnerability in children online can be researched by building on the literature for offline risk in children. Assessing risk and harm on the Internet, however, is particularly challenging because calculating the incidence rates of, for example, children being exposed to abuse online and the actual harm resulting from these hostile online encounters can be difficult. Indeed, there are no objectively verified and accurate statistics about how many children are exposed to inappropriate content, and therefore what is usually being reported is the 'risk of the risk' that might result in harm, which may be completely disproportionate as not all risk results in harm.

At present, the literature regarding online harm is sparse, making it difficult to understand whether a risk results in harm or how the Internet plays a role in known harm. Clearly, the situation regarding online risk is quite different from offline risk, however, it has been documented that children who are vulnerable offline are also more likely to be at risk online [8, 9].

Further understanding of the risk and protective factors that mediate the relationship between online and offline risk and harm seems mandatory, especially when considering a socio-technological context that is in constant change where the use of the Internet is widely spread among children and young people, creating new interactions between risk and protective factors.

For example, a recent systematic review of the effect of online communication and social media on young people's wellbeing [10] has showed contradictory evidence indicating that the Internet acts merely as a facilitator of human interaction and is itself value-free, neither promoting the good nor the bad. The findings from this review showed that online communication allow young people to increase the size and composition of their social networks can be either beneficial, because it can increase social support and social capital, or harmful through increased likelihood of exposure to abuse content or promotion of maladaptive coping strategies, such as self-harm [11]. Taking these findings into consideration, strategies to support the wellbeing of young people may wish to focus on the particular application being used, the communicative and non-communicative activities taking place, and the social support available offline to that individual to manage potential harm.

Due to the inevitable relation between humans and the digital world, it is more important than ever before that children and young people are familiar and confident with computers and technologies, not only because technology-related skills will optimise their future job opportunities, but also because promotes digital equalities and participation in society (e.g., digital citizenship) [12]. Therefore, it is vital that children are taught the benefits of new technologies and the associated risks but without frightening them or focusing too much on the risks associated with modern-day issues such as pornography, 'trolling', 'sexting', cyberbullying, and so on. For example, if we look back at previous research on youth prevention of substance misuse, we will find evidence showing that frightening messages do little to modify young people's risky or undesirable behaviour [13].

Recent evaluations and systematic reviews of Internet safety programmes showed that while participants can retain messages as indicated in follow-up questionnaires, there is little apparent impact on participant's behaviour [14-18]. There are several critical lessons to be learnt from previous research on prevention science that could guide new Internet safety educational materials. Recommendations include the development of interventions around strategies that are evidence-based and grounded in theory, meaning that the intervention explicitly defines why and how it is effective, indicating the social, behavioural and communication theories from which such strategies have been developed.

According to the literature [19, 20] effective prevention programmes target actual vs. perceived risks factors. For example, there is evidence to support that most young online sex crime victims are aware of the age difference of their perpetrator before meeting them face-to-face [21], therefore, educating young people about age deception is not as relevant as to provide education about judgement on sexual correspondence. Similarly, understanding risks and protective factors may help us understand who is actually vulnerable and avoid alarmist public perceptions that all children are 'at risk', consequently increasing the media panic that results in demands to restrict children's Internet access, increase surveillance or violate data protection and online freedom.

Prevention programmes are most effective when they are integrated into school curricula, implemented consistently, and

delivered by trained educators [22, 23]. Extracurricular activities, however, are often perceived as more flexible and dynamic than activities within the National Curriculum, which could prevent innovative activities from becoming a 'programme' ending up being bureaucratised and eventually fossilised. Understanding the relationship between young people and the Internet is crucial for designing effective interventions that promote not only the technical knowledge and skills necessary to successfully operate digital devices, but also promote a number of other aspects.

For instance, interventions could be designed to cover the cognitive and social skills necessary to recognise and integrate new models of social interaction (e.g., Facebook) and develop emotional intelligence to deal with the affective feedback from online interaction (e.g. Twitter). Interventions should also acknowledge alternative views and cultures and adapting to them (e.g., online forums), adjust self-control and self-awareness to manage time spent online (e.g., online gaming), recognise and address new types of malign intention (e.g., online grooming), adapt from a close, individual-based model of learning and creation to one based on collectively sourced collaboration (e.g., crowdsourcing), and so on. In this paper, the concept of *digital literacy* takes the humanities approach to consider the social skills and cultural competencies required to enabling participation within the new media culture.

According to Jenkins et al [24], there are three main problems that any digital literacy programme should address: the first issue tackles the inequalities in young people's access not only to new media technology and the Internet, but to skills and content that is most beneficial (i.e., what they call the participatory gap). The second issue focuses on the transparency problem or the potential commercial interests that may influence online decisions. This problem becomes apparent when analysing the advertising practices displayed on online gaming or the dangers of blending false or inaccurate information from facts. This is especially relevant when taking into consideration results from a systematic review on how children make sense of online resources showing a lack of both knowledge and interest in assessing how information was produced [25]. The third challenge focuses on the ethics, or how to encourage young people to become more reflective about the ethical choices they make online, and the potential impact on others. The ethics challenge is linked to digital citizenship and relates to the content young people post online, the content they access to (e.g., adult content), and compliance with implicit/explicit online community rules. These three issues (i.e., participatory gap, transparency and ethics) are central themes developed and dramatized in the iRights Youth Juries. These three problems related to the Right to Agency, the Right to Know and the Right to Digital Literacy described further below.

Finally, experts on prevention science [1] have also pointed out that creative and multi-faceted approaches involving peers, parents, teachers and the general public on either generic awareness campaigns or more specific/targeted training is also desirable.

3. IRIGHTS YOUTH JURIES

This section briefly describes the iRights Youth Juries, a new methodological approach for the promotion of digital literacy among children and young people. These juries take into consideration all the cumulative evidence and recommendations on online risk and protective factors, including the fuzzy links between risk, harm, and vulnerability, the need for a theoretical context, known predictors for successful prevention

programmes such as implementation and delivery, the issues that literacy programmes should address, and who to involve on such programmes.

2.1 Juries

This paper presents an innovative methodology to bring people together and facilitate reflection upon the issue of digital rights. What we are calling juries are similar to focus groups, but unlike many focus groups, juries have an explicit objective of arriving at clear recommendations regarding digital rights. Using the terminology of 'juries' is an important decision, as it is to be hoped that participants will subsequently feel a sense of responsibility as decision-makers, and facilitate participation and discussion.

How the jury is delivered and implemented is also extremely important, not only because the juries should be replicable and participants' outputs should not depend on the personal attributes of the facilitator or educator, but because explicit training, guidelines, and processes are in place, and a sense of ownership, responsibility, and care are also part of the training. For example, understanding the current evidence on online risks and protective factors is important to ensuring that accurate information and facts are discussed during the deliberation process.

It has been consistently shown that interactive programmes with skills training offered over multiple sessions outperform non-interactive, lecture-based, one-shot programmes [19, 26]. Currently, our juries are highly interactive and the scripts developed to dramatize the scenarios have been co-produced with young people to explore their personal concerns and online experiences. When co-producing scenarios with young people we are enhancing engagement opportunities, making these more real, easier to relate to, and consequently, maximising youth involvement on discussions.

The aim of our juries is not only to find out what participants (i.e. the "jurors") think and feel about the experiences of the digital world, but to discover what shapes their thinking and whether they are open to changing their minds in the light of discussion with peers or exposure to new information. In order to explore such questions, we are interested in discussing i) the reasons that jury members give for adopting particular perspectives and positions; and ii) the extent to which participant's perspectives and positions change, individually and collectively, between their arrival on the jury session and their departure. The jury session is typically lead by a trained facilitator, whose task is to provide a safe space for participants to express themselves freely and critically while demystifying issues around technology, data privacy, informed consent, and so on.

3.1 Vignettes

The use of dramatic scenarios builds upon the methodological research tradition of using *vignettes* as prompts to elicit reflective responses from participants. Vignettes are more frequently used in applied drama within educational settings which has a long tradition and for which there is extensive evidence on the underlying social, cognitive and emotional processes associated to applied drama for facilitating learning and development [27-29].

Bloor and Wood [30] define vignettes as: "A technique used in structured and in-depth interviews as well as focus groups, providing sketches of fictional (or fictionalized) scenarios. The respondent is then invited to imagine, drawing on her own experience, how the central character in the scenario will behave. Vignettes thus elicit situated data on individual or

group values, beliefs and norms of behaviour. While in structured interviews respondents must choose from a multiple-choice menu of possible answers to a vignette, as used in in-depth interviews and focus groups, vignettes act as a stimulus to extended discussion of the scenario in question.”(pp.183)

While the format of vignette presentation can vary including short video clip presentation and live acting, its aims and objectives are usually the same: to facilitate discussion, reflection, and deliberation amongst a group of young people (e.g. in this case, the jury) that may develop new attitudes, opinions, and interpretations about their digital rights and therefore, the potential benefit and harm associated with specific online activities. Vignettes can take several forms and their development and administration should always protect the research participants, especially when sensitive issues are being presented [31]. Usually vignettes are short stories that are read out loud to participants. Some researchers have used film and music, while others have used interactive web content or live acting, with its value deriving from combining the stimulus of the vignette method with the liveness and indeterminacy of the applied drama/theatre-in-education tradition.

The interpretation of responses to the scenarios entails complex analysis, involving the need to be clear about what we think responses represent, the extent to which there is a relationship between expressed beliefs and actions, the possibility that some participants might have felt under pressure to ‘give the right answer’, and the degree of consistency between post-scenario comments and broader findings from the group session tapes’ and transcripts’ [32, 33].

Vignettes have been used by researchers from a range of disciplines, including scholars studying public acceptance of mentally ill residents within a community [34], multicultural integration in neighbourhoods [35], the neglect and abuse of elderly people [36] and early onset dementia [37]. Vignettes have proved to be particularly useful in eliciting reflective responses from groups of young people: Barter and Renold [38] used them very successfully in their research with young people exploring violence in residential children’s homes; Conrad [39] used vignettes as a way of talking to young rural Canadians about what they considered to be ‘risky activity’; Yungblut et al [40] used them in their work with adolescent girls to explore their lived experiences of physical exercise; and Bradbury-Jones et al [41] employed vignettes to explore children’s experiences of domestic abuse. To date we are not aware of any published research using vignettes to promote digital literacy.

3.3. iRights Youth Juries

This paper follows a series of iRights Youth Juries held in three UK cities including twelve young people per session aged 12-17 and from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. These juries illustrate the ‘improvised drama’ element of a piece of research lead by iRights [42], a new civil society initiative that is working to create a future where all young people have the fundamental right to access the digital world ‘creatively, knowledgeably and fearlessly’. The juries were developed in collaboration with the SHM Foundation, The University of Leeds, and The University of Nottingham to explore five predefined digital rights and their implications with juries of young people. The following are the five digital rights covered:

1. The Right to Remove: ‘Every child and young person under 18 should have the right to easily edit or delete any and all content they themselves have created. It must be right for under 18s to own content they have created, and to have an easy and clearly signposted

way to retract, correct and dispute online data that refers to them.’

2. The Right to Know: ‘Children and young people have the right to know who is holding or profiting from their information, what their information is being used for and whether it is being copied, sold or traded. It must be right that children and young people are only asked to hand over personal data when they have the capacity to understand they are doing so and what their decision means. It must be also be right that terms and conditions aimed at young people are written so that typical minors can easily understand them.’
3. The Right to Safety and Support: ‘Children and young people should be confident that they will be protected from illegal practices and supported if confronted by troubling or upsetting scenarios online. It must be right that children and young people receive an age-appropriate, comparable level of adult protection, care and guidance in the online space as in the offline. And that all parties contribute to common safety and support frameworks easily accessible and understandable by young people.’
4. The Right to Make Informed and Conscious Decisions (The Right to Agency): ‘Children and young people should be free to reach into creative and participatory places online, using digital technologies as tools, but at the same time have the capacity to disengage at will. It must be right that the commercial considerations used in designing software should be balanced against the needs and requirements of children and young people to engage and disengage during a developmentally sensitive period of their lives. It must also be right that safety software does not needlessly restrict access to the Internet’s creative potential.’
5. The Right to Digital Literacy: ‘To access the knowledge that the Internet can deliver, children and young people need to be taught the skills to use and critique digital technologies, and given the tools to negotiate changing social norms. Children and young people should have the right to learn how to be digital makers as well as intelligent consumers, to critically understand the structures and syntax of the digital world, and to be confident in managing new social norms. To be a 21st century citizen, children and young people need digital capital.’

During the iRights Youth Juries, participants put the Internet on trial by deliberating on a series of real-life digital scenarios, previously produced in partnership with young people and brought to life by live actors. To work in equal partnership with children and young people is relevant to further develop the iRights Youth Juries and ensure vignettes present real issues and experiences to which young people can relate to and maximise their ecological validity. Working with young people as equal partners is also important to guarantee that the language used to dramatize the scenarios resonates with their vocabulary and expressions. Because scenarios have to be co-produced with local young people, vignettes are idiosyncratic and sensitive to cultural differences as they should represent a specific and distinct point in time, avoiding universalistic terms. In this way, the scenarios developed for this first wave of iRights Youth Juries will differ from those developed in the near future as smart phone applications, computer games and lexicon around technologies rapidly evolve with time.

In relation to the three main problems outline by Jenkins et al., (i.e., participatory gap, transparency and ethics) our juries have been designed to promote social skills and cultural

competencies through dialogue, collaboration, and discussion. The juries offer objective information about data privacy issues and a space for reflection to develop critical-analysis skills on how media shapes perceptions of the word. The dilemmas or conflicts that the scenarios bring to life include an element of reflection on the negative as well as the positives exhibited on the Internet. These dilemmas also encourage young people to pull knowledge and reconcile conflicting information to form a coherent picture. This is a form of problem solving valuable in shaping all kind of relationships (e.g., knowledge, community, tools, etc.).

The presence of live actors added a realistic dimension to the deliberation process and served to highlight key themes and issues by bringing them to life and stimulate discussions. This could be considered a form of simulation, encouraging young people to interpret and construct models of real-world processes. As the dramatized scenarios are highly dynamic, allowing space for improvisation and interaction between actors and participants, young people can formulate hypotheses of 'what is going to happen next', test different variables in real time, and modify or refine their interpretation of the 'real world' while engaging them in a process of modelling (i.e., learning that takes place in a social context through observation). It is well known [43, 44] that students learn more through direct observation and experimentation than simply by reading text books, or listening in the classroom setting. Simulations not only broaden the kinds of experiences students may have but brings capacities to understand problems from multiple perspectives, to assimilate and respond to new information.

These juries are embedded in a research process designed to explore digital rights and their implications with juries of young people. Specifically, the research project has been designed to capture reflections on (1) their experiences of anxiety, uncertainty, frustration, and aspiration in using digital technologies; (2) their understanding of who 'runs' the Internet, who polices it, what 'it' is, and how far they feel they can control their digital experiences; (3) their sense of their own digital literacy and its limitations; (4) their responses to new information about the Internet and digital technologies; (5) the relevance and effectiveness of specific digital rights (see below) in relation to such experience; (6) appropriate language and techniques for sharing and disseminating digital rights; and (7) ways of further engaging young people in thinking about and acting upon their rights as digital citizens.

Future youth jury developments should incorporate skills training over multiple sessions. For example, if a scenario focuses on the 'right to know', a more hands-on session or workshop could focus on how to avoid third-party tracking cookies designed to compile long-term records of individual's browsing histories. Skills training could complement the deliberation process on potential privacy concerns that cookies represent when storing passwords and sensitive information, such as credit card numbers and address. Ideally, juries should be offered on more than one session and present a repertoire of scenarios that have been co-produced with a local representative sample of children and young people to illustrate up-to-date and culturally relevant online youth concerns and celebrations. The core measures used within the current study included semi-structured interviews and questionnaires completed before and after the jury, designed to assess attitudinal changes. Our current research focuses on comparing iRights Youth Juries' outcome measures (i.e., attitudinal change and semi-structured interviews) when, instead of live acting, short video clips are presented. While live acting adds an element of excitement, its high costs and complex logistics may impede wider dissemination and consequently minimise participation. Video

is a plausible format for secondary schools where iRights Youth Juries can be easily recreated and delivered within both drama and IT school departments. During ETHICOMP2015 we intend to explore conference attendees' rationales for accepting and rejecting accounts of social reality or proposals for digital strategies or policies (e.g. online data protection).

We suggest initiating this session by allocating time for delegates to speak freely about which digital rights should be considered and their experiences of digital activity. This can be done in small groups to ensure all voices are heard. The jury can vote on the digital rights proposed in each group and the three that received the most votes could be selected for further deliberation. Each stage of the jury deliberation will conclude with a facilitated discussion in which participants are urged to formulate one key principle that would allow them to experience greater control over the aspect of digital activity for which the digital rights were under consideration. During each of these discussions jury participants witness a scenario: a short video clip of an incident or dilemma presented with a view to eliciting thoughtful resolutions from participants. Participants are encouraged to discuss each of the scenarios or vignettes and decide how they think the dramatized situation should be resolved. Resolutions and their consequences are then discussed further.

This session is part of conference track 'New ideas on bringing people together / novel formats', and these are some of the prompts or topics ETHICOMP2015 delegates may reflect on and offer advice relating to:

- potential and possible digital rights
- the relevance and effectiveness of digital rights
- the ways in which digital rights (or their absence) can affect us
- techniques for sharing and disseminating digital rights
- ways of further engaging with the general population in thinking about and acting upon digital rights

This method of deliberation – space for participants to express, compare and make sense of their views and experiences - is expected to generate thoughts among delegates for critical and reflective thinking about digital rights with the view to modify undesirable behavior. We believe iRights Youth Juries will bring an engaging and exciting element to ETHICOMP2015, and in the near future an alternative to existing Internet Safety programmes offered to school and parents that risk lacking relevance to members of the cohort for whom they are designed.

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